basic requirements for food, nutrition and health. These shelters also have provisions for health care, quality and flexi-time education and vocational training, including provision for children to safely keep their belongings earnings.

Children in difficult circumstances

1204. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a report, 'Status of Children in India 2008', reveals that a vast group of children living in difficult circumstances such as children of long-term patients, women prisoners children with special needs, riot, militancy and disaster-affected children, refugee and displaced children, and children in orphanages and homes do not receive early childhood education;

(b) if so, the efforts made by Government in this regard; and

(c) the progress of existing schemes in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KRISHNA TIRATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one of the services provided under the Ministry of Women and Child Development's, Integrated Child Development Services Scheme to children of 3-6 years. The scheme has been universalized to cover all habitations in the country which includes children in difficult circumstances also. Presently about 3.32 crore children are the beneficiaries of the ECE services under the scheme.

The Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme of this Ministry also provides for pre-school education for children between 3-6 years of age, in the crèches. As on date Ministry has sanctioned 31718 creches with capacity of 25 children each.

The newly launched Integrated Child Protection Scheme provides for maintaining minimum standards of care in child care institutions for children in need of care and protection, including children in difficult circumstances. The minimum standards of care include age appropriate education. This scheme is implemented from the current financial year 2009-10.

Underage marriage

1205. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than a third of the world's child brides are from India, according to studies conducted by UNICEF;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to impose ban on such underage marriages by educating the parent through Government Agencies/NGOs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KRISHNA TIRATH): (a) As per the United Nations International Children Education Funds (UNICEF) Report, 'The Progress for Children-A Report Card on Child Protection" of September, 2009, more than one in three women in the world who were married as children, are from India. It is a Global Report base don 96 countries representing 61% of the world population. This report is based on data available for 2000-2007 from various sources.

(b) and (c) In order to prohibit child marriages and to make the provisions of the Act more effective with punishment for offenders, a new legislation "The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006" was notified in the Gazette of India on 11th January, 2007 and the said Act has been enforced *w.e.f.* 1.11.2007. In addition the Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched the Integrated Child Protection Scheme aimed for care and protection of children. Also, awareness generation and advocacy measures are continuously being undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in this connection.

Stunted growth due to malnutrition

†1206. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that growth of Indian Children has been stunted due to malnutrition;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that forty per cent population of malnutrition affected children of world live in the country alone;

(c) if so, the effective schemes being outlined by Government to prevent the children from malnutrition; and

(d) if so, by when and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KRISHNA TIRATH): (a) Stunting is one of the consequences of malnutrition.

(b) The percentage of world's malnourished children living in India varies from 30 to 40% depending on the growth standards and population projections used.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of Women and Child Development is addressing the problem of malnutrition among children below 6 years through the ICDS in all States/UTs. The scheme, *inter-alia*, provides a component of Supplementary Nutrition which is primarily designed to bridge the gap between the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) and the Average Daily Intake (ADI), The Government has also enhanced the financial as well as nutritional norms for different categories of beneficiaries as follows:—

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.